COMMANDER'S HATCH

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Observations on the Division AWE Now That the Smoke Has Cleared

The Division Advanced Warfighting Experiment of November is completed, and now that the smoke has cleared, it is appropriate to present my assessment. The final results for the TRADOC commander will be published by TRAC in the near future. This is only a 'quick look,' a warning order based upon emerging insights.

All in all, I believe this was a successful experiment that clearly demonstrated the increasing potential of many experimental and future digital systems and concepts. The 4ID displayed tactics, techniques, and procedures that will serve as a firm foundation for future doctrinal development. The experiment showed that we've made great leaps forward in a very short time, but that a lot of work is still needed in man-machine interfaces, systems integration, command post mobility, command platforms, and communication systems. Our continuing challenge today is to take these lessons learned, determine their impacts, and ensure that we incorporate the correct lessons into current and future training, tactics, and force development.

The Division AWE was conducted using a BCTP "Warfighter-like" scenario designed to exercise the 4ID commanders and staffs to brigade and separate battalion level. The strategic and tactical settings were developed and refined by Joint Venture, BCTP, TRAC, and III Corps, with the 4ID command group and planners providing input as appropriate.

The hypothetical scenario had the 4ID deploying to the island of Lantica in September 2003, and employed under III Corps as part of the Combined Joint Task Force Lantica. The World Class OPFOR provided the enemy structure and doctrine. Missions for 4ID included deployment, approach march, limited counterattack, reconstitution, deliberate defense, hasty attack, and deliberate attack.

I am listing these insights with emphasis on DTLOMS impacts for the mounted force, brigade and below.

In regard to doctrine and the heavy brigade, the first insight was the amount of combat assets required for force protection. The requirement for providing security is valid, because most of the high-value assets are critically vulnerable and cannot protect themselves. The impact of this was BCTs fighting with six company teams, **or the equivalent of 1.5 task forces in the current structure.** These security missions were generally maintained during the close fight, to the maximum extent possible. When forced to, the brigade commanders committed the security forces to the close fight. In reality, this would have been a true challenge to execute — contacting units that were generally beyond current communication ranges, moving them, and committing them to the fight when they had probably never seen the plan, inevitably resulting in a piecemeal commitment of forces. Given that these security requirements will probably not diminish in the near future, doctrine needs to address techniques for conducting these force protection missions, how to achieve security through positioning assets near combat forces, and related techniques. These types of missions should be incorporated into training scenarios at the CTCs.

The Division AWE Blue Force structure was based upon the three-company combat battalions, as found in the conservative heavy division redesign. This reduced size of the task force increased the significance of the brigade in constituting and committing a reserve, since task forces lack the assets to do so. The brigade role in breaching is also more significant, since the task forces lack the power to successfully execute a deliberate breach, and if successful, lack the assets to exploit it. Additionally, the reduced size increases the importance and reliance on aviation, artillery, and dynamic obstacles to shape the battlefield and set the conditions for, or complete, decisive operations. Avoiding the close

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fight until favorable conditions exist is increasingly important. In a larger context, the Division AWE has shown the BCTs operating with a higher degree of independence, guided more by the commander's intent than precise control. These expanded battlespace operations, as envisioned by Force XXI patterns of operations, have shown BCTs acquiring and attacking enemy formations at distances beyond 100 kilometers.

At task force level, tactics became simpler. In the offense or defense, the options are two up, one back; one up, two back; or three on line. But although the options are simpler, this does not mean that executing operations became easier. The reverse was true. No reserve was created at task force level, and usually not at brigade level. Because the task force lacked a reserve, the tempo of the task force suffered. On more than one occasion, the brigades could not capitalize on opportunities to seize the initiative. Further evaluation of this issue is needed and will be conducted in constructive, virtual, and live training.

On the training side, we are seeing the need to develop a digital "classroom" for the leader and a COFT-like trainer for staffs in order to sustain individual and collective skills. Time-perishable skills and initial training of new personnel mandate the continual "drill square" approach for future FBCB2, ATCCS, and related communication systems/tactical internet.

During the Division AWE, the current manning levels in various TOCs were inadequate, especially for the division cavalry squadron. Machine operators cannot be expected to sustain intense operations for 12-hour shifts for days at a time. High-use systems like the S2 section's ASAS and the FSE's AFATDS may require three operators to sustain continuous operations. This issue will require further analysis before a solution is resolved.

A key item is the increased importance of LNO teams, in both transferring information from C2 node to C2 node and as a bridge for those adjacent units that are not digitized. In a digitized unit, the LNO would require a vehicle with two FM radios, TACSAT, MSRT, EPLRS, and FBCB2 in order to act as that bridge. Brigades would require two such teams of two to three individuals, tasks forces at least one.

In materiel developments, the human-machine interfaces have gotten better, but still require significant improvement. The technology must make the soldier's job easier, not harder. This is an ongoing experiment and as long as we do not lose sight of the end objective, the soldier, the products will only improve.

Soldiers in the TOCs are being asked to do more than was ever envisioned. We "older generation" soldiers have often commented on the "Video Game Youth" that account for many of our entry level soldiers. However, in such experiments as the Division AWE, it is becoming clear that these Nintendo Warriors have many of the skills that we might be screening for in Basic/AIT. It may soon be the norm for computer-literate soldiers to be identified for digital units and add-on courses on digital systems. Is this a wake-up call for those leaders that still consider computers a non-essential tool for the warfighter? You better believe it.

Finally, I cannot over-praise the efforts of the 4th Infantry Division throughout the DAWE. This organization worked tirelessly to ensure the successful execution of the DAWE and has established a high standard for performance by any unit. The leaders and soldiers of this talented organization deserve all the accolades they have received for their key role in the DAWE.

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